

THE REBELLION

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CHAPTER II

THE REBELLION

It is evident that the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 played a crucial role in structuring the social and political life of Malabar. Its influence was felt far beyond the immediate area of impact extending to the whole of Kerala and other parts of India. Its overall reactions created “waves of social transformation”, according to one author.¹ In this study an attempt is being made to analyze the impact of the Rebellion upon the socio-political and economic life of Malabar in the immediate post Rebellion period. This chapter focuses on the characteristics of the *Mappilas* revolts of up to and including 1921 Rebellion. It also discusses the social structure including the land relations that existed in Malabar during the beginning of 20th century, which provides a necessary background for the subject under discussion.

(a) The Land of Malabar and its People

Malabar was one of the districts of Madras Presidency, situated in the West Coast of India stretching along the shores of Arabian Sea about a distance of 150 miles.² It is bounded on the North by the province of Canara, on the East by those of Coorg and Mysore, to the South-East by Coimbatore and to the South by the

¹ N.P. Muhammad, “Pirakkatha Vachanangal” in *Mathrubhumi* Weekly, 1996 October 13, p.26.

² C.A. Innes and F.B.Evans, *Malabar (Gazetteer)* Vol I&II,(1908), Govt. of Kerala, 1997, p.1.

province of Cochin.³ During the British rule, the four Northern Districts of present Kerala State- Cannannore, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palghat formed the Malabar District of Madras Presidency. The erstwhile District of Malabar consisted of Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kurumbranad, Calicut, Wynad, Ernad, Walluvanad, Ponnani and Palghat Taluks. A part of Cochin State was also aligned to the district. It included the towns of British Cochin and seventeen *pattoms* or small isolated estates.⁴

Alberuni was the first person to call the region by the name Malabar.⁵ In the earlier period, the name Malabar was used not only for Northern parts of Kerala, but for the whole region of Kerala. Barbosa mentions that the land of Malabar begins from the place called Cumbala and in all form Hill of Dely and ends at Cape Comerin.⁶ After British occupation Malabar was formed into a District and the whole Malabar district was divided into two i.e. South Malabar and North Malabar. South Malabar roughly corresponded to the Taluks of Ernad, Walluvanad, Ponnani and Palghat and North Malabar consisted of Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kurumbranad and Calicut Taluks. In the present study, the main focus

³ Ward and Conner, *A Descriptive Memoir of Malabar*, Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1995(Reprint), p.1.

⁴ C.A. Innes and F.B. Evans, *op. cit.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2. Also see in *Mathrubhumi*, dated 28th September 2004, report entitled 'Sthalapuram' by K.V. Vijayaraghavan, p.11.

⁶ M. Gangadharan (ed), *The Land of Malabar- Letters from Barbosa*, School of Social Sciences, M.G.University, 2000, p.1.Cumbala is Kumbala,a few kilometers north of Kazargode, Hill of Dely is Ezhimala,and Cape Comerin is Kanyakumari.

is on South Malabar, because it was the centre of almost all the *Mappila* uprisings.

An analysis of the geography of South Malabar is attempted below.

Ernad has an area of 966 square miles containing 94 *amsoms*.⁷ It is bounded on the North, generally by the ridge of Ghats from Wynad for 48 miles, on the North East by the crest of Nilgiris and Koondah Mountains for 28 miles, to the South East and South by the Wallavanad Taluks for 47 miles; the Pandaloor (Panthallore) range of hills and portion of Tiruvangad defines the limit on this side; to the South West from Shernad Taluk for 28 miles, to the West and North West by the Calicut Taluk for 33 miles, the ridge of the lofty range of mountains called Wawool running South from the Ghats and Pannycod range to the West defines the limit of 22 miles.⁸ It is a tract made up of hills, clothed with forest, the eastern portion including the Valley of Nilambur, which produces teak and other timbers.⁹ It had a population of 401, 101 including Mussalmans-237,402, Hindus-163,328 and Christians-371 in 1921.¹⁰ Ernad was the main centre of the outbreaks of 19th and 20th centuries.

Vallavanad is one of the largest divisions in Malabar and it had an area of 880 sq. miles and had 118 *amsoms*.¹¹ It is bounded on the North by Ernad Taluk for 69 miles, by the crest of Koondahs to the North East which defines the limit in

⁷ C. Gopalan Nair, *Moplah Rebellion 1921*, Calicut, 1923, p.1.

⁸ Ward and Conner, *op. cit.*, p.112.

⁹ C. Gopalan Nair, *op. cit.*, p.2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

part, to the East by the Coimbatore province and the Nilgiris for 69 miles, to the South by Neddunganad for 56 miles, the Cherpulacherry river being the limit for 23½ miles, to the South West by Bettadanad and Shernad for 13 miles.¹² It had a population of 394, 517, Hindus 259, 979, Mussalmans 169,919 and Christians 619 and it lies along the foot of Western Ghats in 1921.¹³ Out of its 118 *amsoms*, 68 were in the rebel area.

Palghat, the most South Eastern District of Malabar was divided into two divisions, dominated Tennamullappuram and Wuddamullappuram, and was bounded on the West by the districts of Chalagekurray and Trichuvapairoor, of Cochin to the South by a high ridge of mountains defining the limit common to Shalagoody (Chalakkudy), South East by the subdivisions of Chittoor, to the North by the Coimbatore province and the North West by the Nedungenad Taluk.¹⁴ It was one of the most fertile divisions of Malabar and extensively populated. According to the 1827 census it had a population of 13,898.¹⁵

Ponnani had an area of 426 sq. miles with 121 *amsoms*. It had a population of 533,252, Hindus-281,155- Mussalmans 229,016 and Christians 23,081 in 1921.¹⁶

¹² Ward and Conner, *op. cit.*, p.159.

¹³ C.Gopalan Nair, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Ward and Conner, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ C. Gopalan Nair, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

At the beginning of 20th century Malabar was the most populous districts of Madras province. The population of Malabar District in the 19th and 20th centuries, shows a steady growth. In 1802, the population of Malabar District was 4,65,514, while it was 7,07,556 in 1807. In 1921, the population had increased to 30,98,871.¹⁷ The following tables show the nature of population of Malabar from 1802 to 1921.

Table I¹⁸

Population of Malabar District 1802-1921

YEAR	POPULATION
1802	4,65,514
1807	7,07,556
1831	11,13,497
1851	15,14,909
1861	17,09,081
1871	22,61,250
1881	23,65,635
1891	26,52,565
1901	27,90,281
1911	30,15,119
1921	30,98,871

Table II¹⁹

YEAR	GENERAL POPULATION	HINDUS	MUSLIMS	CHRISTIANS
1807 •	707,556	531,399	170,113	6,044
1921	3,098,871	2,039,339	1,004,327	54,640

¹⁷ K.N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religious and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar-1836-1921*, Delhi, 1989, p.31.

¹⁸ *Census Report*, Madras Presidency, 1921, Part II, p.350, TNA, Chennai.

¹⁹ *Census of India 1807-1921*, also see in M. Gangadharan, *Malabar Rebellion 1921-1922*, Allahabad, 1989, p.34.

From the above tables, it is clear that there was a steady growth of population in Malabar from 1802 to 1921. In 1891, the total population of Malabar was 2.64 million of which 7,59,242 (about 29%) were Muslims. In 1901, the proportion of Muslims population was 30%. It was 31% in 1911²⁰ and 33% in 1921.²¹ Table II₃ shows the Hindu-Muslim population in various Taluks of Malabar in 1921.

Table III²²

TALUKS	HINDUS	MUSLIMS
CALICUT	1,96,435	88,393
CHIRAKKAL	25,498	87,337
COCHIN	7,318	4,999
ERNAD	1,63,328	2,37,402
KOTTAYAM	1,75,048	55,146
KURUMBRANAD	2,59,799	96,463
PALGHAT	3,15,432	47,946
PONNANI	2,81,155	2,29,016
WALLUVANAD	2,59,979	1,33,919
WYNAD	67,845	14,252

The above table shows that about 60% of the Muslim population were concentrated in Ernad, Walluvanad and Ponnani Taluks where the Rebellion took place in 1921. In 1881, 6% of the Muslims were living in towns, the rest were in

²⁰ D.N. Dhanagare, *Peasant Movements in India*, 1920-1950, Delhi, 1989, p.71.

²¹ *Census of India 1921*, TNA, Chennai.

²² *Census Report of India 1921*, Malabar District, Part II, Table II, p.356, TNA, Chennai.

rural areas in small villages (*amsoms*)²³. The rural urban distribution of Muslim population does not appear to have changed dramatically in 1921.²⁴

In the towns, the well-to-do *Mappilas* were mainly engaged in the various service or wage earning sectors. In the inland regions, cultivation of land was the principal source of livelihood, although a fair proportion of the *Mappilas* were engaged in small-scale business, shop keeping and trade. The occupational distribution of *Moplahs* engaged in agricultural occupations at this time was a little over 62%.²⁵ In the Southern Taluks, where this proportion was still higher, an overwhelming majority of *Mappila* peasants were illiterate and unskilled.²⁶ In the Ernad Taluk, there were no schools within miles and even the very few *Moplah* schools existed there were very badly attended.²⁷ The only education they got was from their religious teachers.²⁸

In addition to this, many *Mappilas*, who lived in the smaller market towns or ports such as Perinthalmanna, Ponnani, Tirur, Manjeri, Irikkur and Parappangadi, were involved in trade or landholdings in neighboring villages.²⁹

²³ Dhanagare, *op. cit.*, p.71.

²⁴ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, P.J.Cherien(ed.), Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.180.

²⁵ Dhanagare, *op. cit.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Interview with Chengalat Achutha Menon by correspondent of *The Times*, published in *The Leader*, Wednesday, September 1921, cited in K.N. Panikkar (ed.), *Peasant Protests and Revolts in Malabar*, New Delhi, 1990, p.418.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Dhanagare, *op. cit.*

Close links existed between the countryside and towns in Malabar because of their deep involvement in trading activities. But the main occupation of the people of most of the *Mappilas* concentrated areas in Ernad, Walluvanad and Ponnani Taluks was agriculture. For subsistence, the *Moplahs* in these areas solely depended on land.³⁰ These poor *Mappila* peasants formed the core of all the 19th and 20th century uprisings.

(b) Land System in Malabar in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Malabar land system during the British period consisted of three components-the *jenmy*, the *kanakkaran* (cultivating tenant) and *verumpattakkaran*.³¹ Besides this, there were a large number of agricultural laborers who worked as *adiyars*. Among the *jenmies*, there were earlier *Rajas*, *Namboodiri Brahmins*, important *Nairs* and *Nambiar* families and in some places even *Mappilas*, (though they were much fewer in number).³² But in the beginning, a few *Thiyyas* and even some *Mukkuvars* (fishermans) were among the *jenmies*³³ and most of the tenants were *Mappilas*.³⁴

³⁰ K.N. Panikkar, "Peasant Revolts in Malabar in Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" in A.R. Desai (ed), *Peasant Struggles in India*, Delhi, 1992, p.604.

³¹ A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala- Their History and Culture*, Trivandrum, 1989, p.88.

³² T.C.Vargheese, *Agrarian Changes and Economic Consequences. Land Tenures in Kerala 1850- 1960*, Calcutta, 1970, p.35.

³³ Innes and Evans, *op. cit.*, p.319.

³⁴ E.M.S Namboodiripad, *Selected Writing* Vol. 2, Calcutta, 1985, p.171.

In 1861, it was estimated that about 2/3 of the population were directly depending on land.³⁵ Out of this, the agricultural population comprised of 1.15 million, the *jenmies* numbered only 24,7114; out of them 829 were classified as principal *jenmies*, 23,635 as minor *jenmies* and 250 religious institutions.³⁶ The *jenmies* altogether accounted for less than 2% of the total agricultural population. To this *jenmies* constituting an insignificant minority of agricultural population, belonged particularly every right and interest connected with land, in Malabar.³⁷

The rest of the agricultural population was divided almost equally into two groups-tenants and agricultural laborers, each accounting about 0.55 million.³⁸ Among the tenants, even at the beginning of the century, there was a large section known as customary tenants. To a large extent, they enjoyed fixity of tenure and paid nothing or only very nominal fees. Majority of agricultural laborers were poor *Mappilas* and lower caste Hindus particularly in South Malabar. They were subjected to more exploitation in the hands of both *jenmies* and tenants.

According to K.N. Panikkar, the traditional structure of agricultural society in Malabar was based on 'fragmented feudalism'.³⁹ The *jenmi*, the *kanakkaran* and

³⁵ T.C. Varghese, *op. cit.*, p.39.

³⁶ William Logan, *Malabar Special Commissioners Report on Land Tenures*, Vol. 2, pp.57-59.

³⁷ T.C. Varghese, *op. cit.*

³⁸ Distribution calculated from 1891 census figures, cited in *Ibid.*

³⁹ A term used by K.N. Panikkar in "Peasant Revolts in Malabar" in A.R. Desai (ed.), *op.cit.* p.604.

the peasant shared the produce equally working out a social equation, on the basis of mutual dependence and reciprocal interests, within the confines of a feudal system of exploitation.⁴⁰ There were a number of tenants called the *kanakkudians* (*kanakkaran* or *kanamdar*) who stood between the *jennies* and actual cultivators, who were mostly *verumpattam kudians* or tenants- at- will.⁴¹ The *jenny* usually retained a small part of his land and gave the rest of his land to *kanakkudians*, who in turn, after retaining a part of land for direct cultivation, leased out the remaining land to *verumpattomkudians* for a short term, usually one year.⁴² Also there were a number of other tenurial relations in the district, but *jennam*, *kanam* and *verumpattom* set the general pattern of land holding, especially in the Southern Taluks.⁴³

✓ The Mysorean conquest of Malabar made far-reaching consequences in the traditional land system of Malabar. It was the Mysorean rulers who had put the first challenge against the traditional system. They introduced a new land revenue system in Malabar, where as there was no regular or settled revenue collection until the Mysorean invasion⁴⁴. Hyder Ali made an arbitrary assumption that the state was the exact landowner by law, and the rightful recipient of a portion of its

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ M. Gangadharan, *Rebellion, op. cit.*, p.7.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Vol. II, (1807), Delhi, 1988. p.65.

income⁴⁵. It was, therefore, required that those who worked in the land should pay land tax directly to the Sultan's representative. This new system weakened the firm hold and authority of the *jenmies* over the land. Many *Nairs* lost their position due to the land tax system introduced by the Mysore rulers and these *Nairs* were replaced by the *Mappilas*.⁴⁶ These *Mappilas* were appointed as tax collectors in the name '*muppan*' and they got full protection from the rulers.

But it could not make any positive material impact to alleviate the injustice suffered by the poor farmers. These arrangements opened doors for bribery and corruption. Logan has reported that tax rates were assessed arbitrarily and at the highest possible levels to assure personal gains.⁴⁷ Therefore, criticisms arose against the new revenue arrangement. Though the non-*jenmy* classes got pleased at the decline of the *jenmi*'s power, their own position was not a happy one, and they resisted the ruinous policies of Mysore rulers⁴⁸. The position of *Mappila* peasants not only remained unchanged, but also became much deteriorated. They also had to suffer, the oppressive taxation along with their Hindu brethren. Meanwhile, the losing of the hold of the *jenmy* over the land and its produce and the acquisition of some lands for themselves opened up a new vision for the *Mappilas*. This vision of land ownership and new economic hope did not disappear after the Mysorians

⁴⁵ Roland E Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A study in Islamic Trends*, Madras, 1992, p.98.

⁴⁶ Francis Buchanan, *op. cit.*, p.53.

⁴⁷ William Logan, *Manual*, *op.cit.* p.625.

⁴⁸ Roland E Miller, *op. cit.*, p.99.

had left⁴⁹. It remained even after the elimination of the Mysorean system and it produced an attitude of resentment and conflicts with the old owners of land.

It was the permanent settlement system introduced by the British in 1793 that made fundamental changes in the traditional land system of Malabar. The introduction of British administrative institutions led to the dissolution of the old system by the substitution of a strong central power in place of the divided authority of the feudal chieftains. The British revenue policy and land settlement further helped this process by recognizing the *jenmy* a free hold proprietor, a position that they had enjoyed never before⁵⁰. Due to this, landholders became landless ones overnight.⁵¹ The absolute ownership of land was again vested in the hands of the *jenmy*, he was left free to extract as much as he could from the tenants and under tenants. The most common features of exploitation were (i) enhancement of rent, (ii) eviction and (iii) imposition of renewal fees.⁵² Those who held land directly from the *jenmy* under a variety of tenures like *kanam*, *kuzhikkanom* and *otti* and the subtenants and tenants-at-will, *pattakkar* and *verumpattakkar* were all subjected to the capacity of landlordism.⁵³

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ K.N. Panikkar, "Peasant Revolts in Malabar" in A.R. Desai (ed.) *op.cit.*, p. 604.

⁵¹ A.K. Poduval, *Keralathile Karshaka Prasthanathinte Oru Lekhu Charitram*, Taliparamba, 1969, p.3.

⁵² K.N. Panikkar, "Peasant Revolts in Malabar" A.R. Desai (ed.), *op.cit.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

The *kanakkaran's* independent right in the soil got further reinforced and a system of renewal of *kanom* agreement did exist.⁵⁴ The *kanakkaran* had to pay *kanappanam* to the *jenmy* either as advance of rent or as security for payment of rent. The advance was periodically revised, which was known as *polichezhuthu* or renewal of *kanom* deed. Initially, renewal seems to have taken place only at time of succession to *jenmam* or *kanom* with the *kanakkaran* paying renewal fee as succession duties.⁵⁵ Renewal became more frequent and *jenmy* had the right to enhance the rent or to change the *kanakkaran*, since *jenmy's* share was fixed by customary law. As a part of the British land revenue policy, the judicial courts decreed the renewal of *kanom* tenure at the end of every twelve years. The automatic termination of the contract implied in this decision was not in conformity with past practice.⁵⁶ Thus it introduced fundamental changes in the structure of land relationship.

In the wake of the establishment of British rule in Malabar in 1792, many of the Hindu landlords, who fled from Malabar during the Mysorean rule, returned to Malabar. On their return, the *jenmies*, whether they were at first fully conscious or not of the rights of absolute landlord they had on paper acquired, were in practice, so heavily in debt to the *kanakkudiyans* that they, in any case, lacked the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ William Logan, *Manual, op.cit.*, p. 679.

⁵⁶ K.N. Panikkar, "Peasant Revolts in Malabar" in A.R. Desai, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.605.

means necessary to enforce those rights.⁵⁷ Moreover, the likelihood of the *jenmies* being able to redeem their mortgage was reduced by the heavy demand of land tax, which was deductible from the *jenmi's* share of produce.⁵⁸ The *jenmy* had to face a heavy pressure of burden due to the land revenue assessment. Graeme and Munro were anxious of such heavy demands levied by the Govt. on the annual agricultural outturn in Malabar and later Graeme proposed a general reduction in the land revenue demand in Malabar and it was sanctioned. But this never lessened the burden of taxation and the burden of assessment price of grain in Malabar.⁵⁹ For long years, the land revenue burden was intensified by low prices for agricultural produce. But the percentage of the assessment of rent was inversely proportional to the selling prices. The second quarter of 19th century recorded a steep rise in the prices of all commodities amounting about 27% during a period of two years.⁶⁰ In the fifties, there was a further increase and over a period of nine years, the price of almost every produce increased by more than 100%.⁶¹ Naturally the value of land and its demand suddenly increased. In the traditional system as well as in the British settlements the cultivator was earmarked 1/3 of

⁵⁷ Conrad Wood, *Moplah Rebellion and its Genesis*, New Delhi, 1987, p.64.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.64-65.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁶⁰ *Report of Malabar Special Commission*, pp.1881-2, TNA, Chennai.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.194.

the net produce, but by the beginning of the 20th century his share went down to 2 to 12%.⁶²

Conrad wood is of the opinion that the rise in the price of grain was of great importance in the re-emergence of *jenmy* power in the countryside of Malabar. Only when prices began to rise above the low levels prevailing in 1809-18 and the revenue burden was in consequence reduced in real terms, could the *jenmy* begin to pay off his debts to the *kanakkudians* who only then would begin to appreciate that British rule meant a resurgence of a *jenmy* power.⁶³ Armed with the powers given to the *jenmies* through this new British revenue policy, the landlords not only demanded exorbitant rents and renewal fees, but also introduced several provisions, which facilitated eviction earlier than the stipulated period.⁶⁴ The failure either to give rent or even to provide presents to the satisfaction of landlords was sufficient reason for eviction.⁶⁵ As early as 1833-34 the *Mappila kanakkudians* was being faced with eviction suits brought against him in the local courts by the Hindu *jenmi*.⁶⁶

⁶² F.B. Evans and C.A. Innes, *Notes on Tenancy Legislation*, Madras, 1915, Appendix, quoted in K.N. Panikkar (ed.), "Peasant Protests and revolts in Malabar", New Delhi, 1990, p.X.

⁶³ Conrad Wood, *op. cit.*, p.66.

⁶⁴ K.N. Panikkar, "Peasant Revolts in Malabar" in A.R. Desai (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 606.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ For example see *Decree of Court of Adalat in Malabar Zillah*, Original Suit No. 137 of 1833, cited by Conrad Wood, *op. cit.*, p.66.

The tenants, due to all of their difficulties, could not pay the increased amount of rent and they were at the mercy of landlords. The proceedings of British courts and the elaborate rules and regulations which guided their decisions only added discomfiture to the disadvantages of the peasantry.⁶⁷ Between 1862 and 1880 eviction decrees were passed against 91,720 people.⁶⁸ In other words about one in every twenty cultivators had a decree or eviction passed against him annually. Evictions without resorting to judicial proceedings were more numerous, due to financial stringency and lack of evidence. The tenants found it impossible to defend their rights in the court. The burden of every renewal of lease or *melcharth*, and an upward revision of rent, was borne by the actual cultivator in effect worsening his condition not better than a laborer on subsistence wages.⁶⁹ This resulted in widespread indebtedness of the peasantry. Logan felt that the number of cultivators whose indebtedness was due to the executions of landlords was much higher than actually recorded.⁷⁰ Since, they gave their evidence in the presence of the agents of the lands, most of them preferred to blame the weather or expenses of maintaining their families rather than their landlords. Due to all these,

⁶⁷ K.N. Panikkar, "Peasant Revolts in Malabar" in A.R. Desai (ed.), *op. cit.*

⁶⁸ K.N. Panikkar (ed.), *Peasant Protests*, *op. cit.*, p.X.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.XI.

⁷⁰ Cited in *Ibid.*

many of the peasants fell in to extreme poverty. This poverty and unbearable sufferings later forced these illiterate and backward poor peasants to take up arms against their landlords.

(c) The 19th Century Uprisings

These oppressed tenants and subtenants, majority of whom were *Mappila* peasantry, rose repeatedly in revolt against the existing system of exploitation, from the very beginning of 19th century onwards. The rural society of Malabar was in a state of "perpetual ferment".⁷¹ The revolts, decoits, thefts and social banditry, which occurred regularly, were essentially an expression of protests of the rural poor against oppression and exploitation.⁷² This oppressed peasantry mainly included the *Mappilas* holding land either directly from a Hindu *jenny* or from an intermediary. The land was almost exclusively held by Hindus.⁷³ Hence, these conflicts between *Mappila* peasantry and the Hindu land owning class were characterized superficially as the results of communal tensions. These violent insurrections by the *Mappilas* broke out frequently in the 19th century was a never ending source of horrified fascination for British officials in the Madras Presidency.⁷⁴ The British authorities termed these outbreaks as "*Mappila* outrages".

⁷¹ Term used by K.N. Panikkar, in *Against*, *op. cit.*, p.49.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ K.N. Panikkar, "Peasant Revolts in Malabar", in A.R. Desai (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.608.

⁷⁴ Conrad Wood, *op. cit.*, p.7.

The insurgents predominantly came from the ranks of poor peasants, agricultural laborers, artisans and petty traders, majority of whom were *Mappilas*.⁷⁵ Some times, due to this predominance of *Mappila* peasants in the conflicts, the British authorities tried to represent these conflicts between *Mappila* peasantry and Hindu landlords as communal conflicts.

Even though there were a large number of Hindus also among the tenants, their participation was lacking in the 19th century uprisings and was very less in the 1921 Rebellion. The landlords also subjected these Hindu tenants to severe oppression and exploitation. Among the *jenmies*, along with savarna Hindus there were elitist Muslims also. But it was the *Mappila* tenants who take up arms against the *jenmies*. Naturally there will arise a doubt why it was so? The existing social relations among the Hindus were powerful to check an outbreak against their *jenmies*. The Hindu tenants were mainly confined to the lowest strata in the caste hierarchy. These low caste Hindus were bounded by all pervasive caste system and were prevented from rising against the higher castes. They had been provided a very high status to these landlords. In addition to this, the caste differentiation and untouchability that prevailed in Hindu Society created disunity within the community. All these checked them to take arms against their lords. At the same time, to the Muslims, there were not having such problems. There were no shackles to prevent the *Mappilas* from organizing against the oppressive *jenmies*. They were not against the Hindus, but against existing

⁷⁵ K.N. Panikkar, *Against, op. cit.*, p. 48.

systems in the society like evictions and the implementation of law and order through the Hindu *adhikaris*. These high officials also followed repressive attitude towards the poor sections of the society. More over, there is a concrete idea of solidarity among them, probably the principle of Islam, which acted as a rallying point among them. The mosques and religious prayers as well as the influence of higher Ulamas of Malabar, particularly those in the main centers like Tirurangadi, Manjeri and Ponnani helped greatly in developing solidarity among the *Mappilas*. There is an objective base among the Muslims, but it was not there among the Hindus.

The *Mappila* priests were working with a deliberate purpose of clouding the vision of *Mappila* peasants. E.M.S.Namboodiripad commented about the action of the religious priests as: "it is the interests of these priests to turn the anti-*jenmi* sentiments of peasants in to the anti-Hindu sentiments of the *Moplahs*."⁷⁶ But we cannot accept this version completely because, the religious priests who influenced these riots were not preaching anti-Hindu sentiments, but in their preachings, they gave more emphasis to anti-British and anti-landlord sentiments. But, unfortunately, some communal atrocities took place in the midst of all these.

The religious leaders, who were generally known as Ulamas (including both *Sayyids* and *Sufis* of whom the former being the descendants of Prophet

⁷⁶ E.M.S Namboodiripad, *Selected Writings*, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p.171.

Muhammad) were held in high esteem by the *Mappilas*.⁷⁷ These Ulamas were divided into three groups of professional functionaries, designated as Thangals, Mussaliars and Mullas⁷⁸. Of these, the Thangals enjoyed greater respect in the community on account of their Sayyid lineage⁷⁹ and their traditional Islamic scholarship. The Mussaliars were well educated and acted as teachers and mosque officials throughout the district. Mullas were generally individuals who were performing local household ceremonies.⁸⁰ The earlier British sources indicate that the members of *Mappila* Ulama had themselves participated in the violent attacks upon non-Muslims, which they atleast, implicitly sanctioned in religious terms⁸¹ and sometimes already leading the outbreaks.⁸² It was seldom that *Mappila* divines openly instigated *Mappilas* to undertake in an outbreak to get their grievances redressed.⁸³ More considerations were given to the Ulamas who had commanding influence over the religious believes and social and political attitude of the wider

⁷⁷ Hussain.K, "Uddat-al-Umara, A Compilation of Religious Decrees on the *Mappila* Peasant Revolts of 19th century", Paper presented in Indian History Congress, Calicut University, 2000, p.1.

⁷⁸ Stephen. F. Dale, *The Mappilas of Malabar-1498-1922*, Oxford, 1980, p.111.

⁷⁹ Syuids were people who suppose to migrate from Hadramauth in Yemon. During 18th century several families migrated into Malabar. The Ba-Alavis of Mamburam was the most important Sayyid family and two members of them-Sayyid Alavi and Sayyid Fazal had a major role in the major uprisings of the 19th century.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² A.P. Ibrahimkunhu, *op. cit.*, p.90.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Mappila population.⁸⁴ These "traditional intellectuals"⁸⁵ had close link with in the *Mappila* community.

Among these intellectuals, the most important were -Umar Quazi of Veliyamkode, Sayyid Alavi Thangal and Sayyid Fazal Thangal of Mamburam⁸⁶. Almost all these priests or 'Ulamas played a major role in inculcating an anti-British feeling among the *Mappilas*. Through their speeches, they aroused anti-British feelings in the community. Umar Quazi was believed to have magical abilities to create miracles. This helped him in earning considerable influence and popularity. He raised his voice against heavy taxation of British authorities and advocated for non-payment of taxes.

Mamburam Thangals- Sayyid Alavi and his son Sayyid Fazal- also enjoyed special religious influence among the *Mappilas* due to their lineage from Prophet Muhammad. Due to this lineage as well as their spiritual and mystic disposition, the Mamburam Thangals earned special mark of respect and veneration. Sayyid Fazal severely criticized the government and the *jenmy* system in Malabar. He is believed to have declared: "it was not a sin, but a merit to kill a *jenmy* who evicted a peasant from his land".⁸⁷ The British authorities considered the *fatwas*

⁸⁴ Stephen F Dale, *op. cit.*, p.112.

⁸⁵ Term used by K.N. Panikkar, in *Against, op. cit.*, p.60.

⁸⁶ K N Panikkar talks about four Ulamas including Makthi Thangal. But he did not play any direct or indirect role in the Rebellion. Instead, he was against such violent Rebellions.

⁸⁷ Quoted in William Logan, *Malabar Special Commission Report 1880-82*, Vol.II, p.48 on the basis of the information given by C.Kanaran, Deputy Collector of Malabar.

issued by Sayyid Fazal as a tool causing anti-Hindu and anti-British attitudes among the *Mappilas*. Any how, one thing is clear that the teaching of Mamburam Thangals were highly influential in the religious and cultural spectrum of *Mappilas*. The Mamburam Tangals, especially Fazal, tried their best to create aspirations for freedom and feelings of nationalism among the *Mappilas*.⁸⁸

These traditional intellectuals collectively interpreted, elaborated and propagated the religious ideology and provided an intellectual tone to them by establishing a network of mosques for prayers and congregation.⁸⁹ Their interventions in the social and religious life and their widely believed ability to do miracles, tended to reinforce the popular culture based on religious faith and superstition.⁹⁰ It was stated that the religious legitimisation of *Mappila* uprisings was drawn from this cultural context, expressed by these traditional intellectuals. In this sense, the Ulamas and other religious leaders became a crucial element in the uprisings,⁹¹ but they did not constitute a formally organized religious, social or political movement as in the case of the Wahhabi campaigns in North India in the 19th Century.⁹² The legacy of Mamburam Thangal had existed in Mamaburam, Thirurangadi regions even after the deportation of Thangal. Muslims gave more importance to Isnad (reportage). Most of these traditional stories had

⁸⁸ Ottamaliyekkal Muthukoya, *Mamburam Thangal Charitram*, Thirurangadi, 2001, p.28.

⁸⁹ K.N. Panikkar, *Against*, *op. cit.*, p.65.

⁹⁰ *Correspondence on Mappila Outrages Act*, p.446, TNA, Chennai. Cited in, *Ibid*.

⁹¹ K.N. Panikkar, *op.cit.*

⁹² Roland E Miller, *op. cit.*, p.135.

given a written value. There was a feeling among them that Sayyid Fazal give away voluntarily and not deported. There was belief among them that he will come back. Such traditional believes helped much to the existence of anti-British feelings among them⁹³. In short, it has to be made clear that, even though the Ulamas were not the direct participants in the Rebellion, the influence of their ideas and preachings played a major role in leading the community for waging a war against British imperialism.

From the early part of 19th century onwards, there were a large number of uprisings in the Southern Taluks of Eranad, Valluvanad and Ponnani. Among these attacks, majority were against Namboodiri Brahmins or *Nairs*. The assaults and murders were generally prefaced by a similar series of rituals, and in all but a few instances their climax was the self-sought martyrdom of the assailants. Taken as a whole, the attacks represented a continuation of *Mappila* challenge to the economic and social power of the upper castes and also to the political authority of the British. But as the ritual context of the outbreak made clear that the *Mappilas* were conceived and carried them out as religious acts.⁹⁴ The largest single groups of incidents were directly or indirectly related to the control of land and others were prompted by issues such as apostasy of lower caste converts or sometimes imply a desire to attain martyrdom. In the 1841 Pallippuram uprising, the leader was a small tenant with a family of 17, who had been evicted from his land by a

⁹³ It is reported from oral testimony from numerous old men of the area.

⁹⁴ Stephen F Dale, *op. cit.*, p.119.

court decree. This had been the cause, which led to many of the outbreaks. But no doubt that the element of religion was also there which provoked the *Mappila* tenants to conduct a collective action. But their main targets were not religious attacks, but British officials, *jenmies* and their dependents.⁹⁵

Almost all these assaults and murders were generally preceded by certain rituals. This made all activity the character of a Jihad from their perception, but actually they have to be considered as 'real social protests carried out in the form of religious acts.'⁹⁶ The preparation for an outbreak involved the intending participants donning the white clothes of martyr, divorcing their wives, asking those they felt they had wronged for forgiveness, and receiving the blessings of a Thangal (as Sayyids) for the success of their great undertaking.⁹⁷ The one good that may be said to have emerged from "these meaningless sacrifices was the opening of some eyes to the injustice under which the *Mappilas* labored."⁹⁸

The riots were mainly localized incidents. One or two persons, who were ready to die after killing their enemies, took up arms against their opponents. On the way they used to kill or convert persons who belong to non-Muslim

⁹⁵ K.N. Panikkar, *Against, op. cit.*, p.70.

⁹⁶ William Logan, *Manual, op. cit.*, pp.554-55.

⁹⁷ Conrad Wood, *op. cit.*, p.7. The belief in the blessings of Thangals and their super powers is wide spread among the local *Mappilas*. They believed that if they got blessings of Thangal and wore a protective thread, no one could catch them. Interview with Yusuf. C.K, Melmuri, Malappuram, aged 76, on 23-12-04.

⁹⁸ Roland E Miller, *op. cit.*, p.109.

community.⁹⁹ They attacked not only their *jennies*, but also British Offices, courts, railways etc., those stood as symbols of British authority.

The British authorities considered all these outbreaks as a law and order problem arose out of the fanaticism of the *Mappilas*. The District Collector, Mr. Conolly, recommended for the appointment of a commission to report on the causes that have produced or influenced the unhappy state of feeling between the *Mappilas* and Hindus and to suggest remedial measures to prevent similar events in future.¹⁰⁰ T.L. Strange was appointed as the special commission on 17th February 1852, whose report was very significant in the attitude of the British towards the *Mappilas*. He rejected the view that the disturbances had their origin either in the agrarian discontent or in poverty.¹⁰¹ His conclusion was that the general character of the dealings of the Hindu landlords towards their tenantry, whether *Mappila* or Hindu is equitable and far-reaching.¹⁰² The commission reported that the outbreaks were due to the most decided fanaticism of the *Mappilas* stirred by the teachings of ambitious priests.¹⁰³ Strange recommended a repressive policy, which was enacted into law in the *Moplah* Outrages Act XXIII & XXIV of 1854 and Act XXV and XXX in 1859.¹⁰⁴ The punitive measures of

⁹⁹ Madhavan Nair, *Rebellion, op.cit.*, p.19.

¹⁰⁰ *Correspondence on Moplah outbreaks for the year 1849-53*, Vol.8, Madras, 1863, pp.268-73, TNA, Chennai.

¹⁰¹ Robert L. Hardgrave, *op. cit*, p.5.

¹⁰² CMO, *Op. cit.*, p.441.

¹⁰³ *T.L. Strange Commission Report*, Dated 25th September 1852, p.411, TNA.

¹⁰⁴ Robert L Hardgrave, *op. cit*.

these Acts were provocative and against the interests of the peasantry. These measures adopted by the Government were not a complete solution to the tenancy problem in Malabar.

After the passing of these *Mappila* Acts, the Government came to be looked upon by the people as the protector of the landlords and due to this, anti-British attitude among the Mappila peasantry was further intensified. This later led to the murder of H.V.Conolly, the District Collector, who had ordered for the deportation of Mamburam Thangal, on 12th September 1855, by three *Mappilas* in the presence of his wife. This provoked the British authorities and they later took severe measures against the *Mappilas*.

In the post 1854 period, many attempts were made on the lives of landlords and many others. Later the whole District was rife with rumours about some internal revolts in one part or the other. On the basis of an anonymous petition, Mr. William Logan, the District Collector was appointed as Special Commissioners in 1881 to inquire into the land tenures and tenant rights in Malabar.¹⁰⁵ The special commissioner found that the problem had its root fundamentally in the early British misunderstanding of the traditional relationship of *jenmy* to the land and the report of Strange that 'the cause of the riot was not agrarian discontent' was wrong.¹⁰⁶ But the officers thought that the agrarian

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

discontent would culminate in the fresh acts of fanaticism directed against individuals, not withstanding the penalties of Strange's repressive legislation.¹⁰⁷ They recorded that the tenants were in perpetual fear of eviction by the landlord, chronically in debt and were driven to the limits of starvation.¹⁰⁸ Thus, according to Logan, agrarian distress was the basic cause of *Mappila* uprisings. The British Resident in Travancore and Cochin, Mr. Mac Gregor forwarded the recommendations.

But, fearing the enmity of the Hindu landlords, British authorities did not take any concrete step to protect the rights of the tenants. They again appointed William Logan as a special commissioner generally to inquire into the question of tenure of land and of tenant rights in Malabar, the *kuzhikkoor* (prize getting to the tenant during the time of eviction) as well as the question of rites for mosques and burial grounds.¹⁰⁹ In his recommendation Logan pointed out that by recognizing *jenny* as the absolute owner of his holdings and therefore free to take a big share of the produce as extort from him, the British had presented him with powers, which were not customary in Malabar.¹¹⁰ The ultimate result of his proposals was the passing of Malabar compensation for Tenants Improvement Act of 1887,

¹⁰⁷ William Logan, *Manual*, *op. cit.*, p.581.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.583.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.581.

¹¹⁰ William Logan, *Report on Malabar Land Tenures*, in *Report on Malabar Special Commission*, Vol. 3 Madras, 1882, p.xvii, TNA.

which was amended in 1900. The Act provided for granting compensation to the evicted tenants for the improvement marked by them on the land.

In actual practice, these Acts did not offer any substantial relief and it did not protect the tenants from indiscriminate eviction and enhancement of rent, even the limited benefit of compensation did not reach them, and, the interpretations of the provisions of the acts by the courts was not favorable to the peasants.¹¹¹ Although the basic intention of the Act was to provide the market value of the improvement to the tenant, in most cases, the court did not take into account the market value at all. Instead the compensation was allowed considering the expenses for making improvements through planting trees etc.¹¹² In his report on the working of the Tenancy Improvement Act, H. Bradley, the acting Collector of Malabar, reported that the object of this Act to check evictions has not been attained.¹¹³ This showed that the authorities did not try to use this Act in its actual practice in Malabar and thus caused further tensions within the Malabar society. The *kanakkar* got some benefits due to this Act, but it did not produce any change upon the conditions of *verumpattakkar*.

The Malabar Special Police, which was organized in 1885 after two violent 'outbreaks' in 1884 near Malappuram, as well as the Act of 1887, failed to check the recurrence of the outbreaks. All the efforts of the government especially the

¹¹¹ K.N. Panikkar (ed.), *Peasant Protests, op. cit.*, p.xviii.

¹¹² M.Gangadharan, *Rebellion, op. cit.*, p.15.

¹¹³ Revenue Dept. Go. No. 4114, dated 25th October 1894, TNA.

opening up of eastern parts of Ernad and Walluvanad with roads, the efforts to impart modern education to the *Mappilas* of the interior through the establishment of a number of *Mappila* schools, enlisting some members of the *Mappila* Ulama on the side of the Government and against the outbreaks, the expansion of the job opportunities to the *Mappilas* in the army, plantations etc. might have contributed to bring about a long respite in the violent risings at the beginning of this century.¹¹⁴ But again there occurred violent outbreaks and this continued till 1919. This led to severe repression on the parts of the authorities through various means including deportation and fining the *Mappila* inhabitants of the rebel areas. The net result of all these was the growth of anti-British and anti-Landlord sentiments among the *Mappilas*, majority of whom belonged to *verumputtakkar*, mainly due to the communal repression and the cruel punitive measures taken by the British Government. This later led to a severe Rebellion in 1921, which has been mentioned by the British authorities as *Mappila* Rebellion.

(c) The 1921 Rebellion

The 1921 Rebellion, which occurred in Malabar on the eve of the launching of Khilafat and Non Co-operation Movement, was one of the most important one comparing to all the other outbreaks that occurred against British imperialism. The character of the Rebellion was quite different from the 19th century uprisings. The 19th century uprisings were mostly localized ones and conducted by the

¹¹⁴C A Innes and F B Evans, *Gazetteer*, op. cit., p.81.

Mappilas with the aim to become Shahids after the murder of the *jenmies* who had treated the *Mappilas* very cruelly. This was mainly led by individual and social vendetta against their *jenmies* which had the characteristic of an ordinary insurgency. But the 1921 uprising was conducted mainly with the aim to eliminate British imperialism from the Indian soil.

The 19th century uprisings were confined only in a village or two and the attack were confined only towards one or two landlords in the vicinity. Even though, they confined only in one or two villages, the news of these uprisings spread into other areas through friendly congregations, religious ceremonies like *nerchas*, *mouleeds* etc. The weekly markets, folk songs, religious festivals etc. helped to spread the news of the resistance, among the people of very remote areas. This contributed much to the growth of an anti-British and anti-landlord feeling among the rural *Mappila* population. Rumours that spread in these areas played a major role in dispersing the news of such attacks among the commoners.¹¹⁵ What was lacking in the Rebellion was a common organization, especially a political organization, to foster effective communication among the people. Even though there was no organization for effective communication among them, they got all important news that happened in the world from the learned men in an around the region. The pan Islamic messages of Khilafat spread

¹¹⁵ K. Gopalankutty, "Rumours and Rebellion in South Malabar: A preliminary enquiry" in Kesavan Veluthatt and Sudhakaran(ed) *Advances in History: Essays in memory of prof: M P Sreedharan*, Calicut, 2003, p.102.

among them very early period onwards. Leaders like Ali Mussaliar, who went to Mecca and other areas gave such information to them. The emergence of nationalist movement in Malabar imparted a new spirit and energy to the poor people of Malabar. Even though the District Congress Committee and other organisations had been formed in the early part of the 20th century itself, they failed to establish effective network of communication and consciousness of the day to day national level politics. In 20th century, this vacuum was filled by the formation of Tenancy, Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements. The emergence of these movements helped to promote a political consciousness in the society, which fostered the feelings of nationalism among the illiterate and backward communities. This dragged *Mappila* peasantry into the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist struggles. K.N. Panikkar remarked that "neither the Khilafat, nor the Non Co-operation Movement, however provided the cause for the Rebellion, but without them, it would not have been so intense and widespread."¹¹⁶

Even before the emergence of these organisations, from 1880s onwards, there were certain other organizations especially among the *Mappilas*. In 1880s, the *Mappila* elitists, who got education, began to involve in local politics and established Himayathul Islam Sabha (also known as *Mappila Sabha*).¹¹⁷ But its membership was confined only to the elitist section of the society such as Thangals, Qazis, traders, merchants, few wealthy *kanamdars*, commercial farmers

¹¹⁶ K.N. Panikkar, *Against, op. cit.*, p.116.

¹¹⁷ Dhanagare, *op. cit.*, p.74.

and professional men. The poor *Mappilas* had no contact with this organization and it remained preoccupied with the aspirations and demands of *Moplah* urban middle class.¹¹⁸ This Sabha expressed its concern over the poverty of the *Mappila* masses, but it condemned their periodic Rebellions.

Another elitist *Mappila* organization was Mannath-ul-Islam Sabha, which was started at Ponnani in 1900. Its main aim was to establish a network of *Mappila* preachers all over Kerala and also to secure new converts to the faith.¹¹⁹ The Sabha worked mainly for the conversion of Hindus into Islam, according to one writer, about Malabar Rebellion.¹²⁰ It was basically an ultra loyalist body dominated by highest echelons of *Moplah* ecclesiastical order and its primary aim was to maintain its own prestige and status.¹²¹ These two organizations could not make any hold or create any political enthusiasm among the poor *Mappila* peasants, who took up arms against their oppressors. Instead, these organisations, through their religious speeches, could establish a kind of religious feelings among the *Mappilas*. But they ignored poor *Mappila* tenants and their condition remained unchanged. Between 1910 and 1921 evictions, heavy rent, excessive lease, renewal fee and poverty of tenants reached its high peak. Thus the peasantry was thrown to the extreme state of poverty and

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.75.

¹²⁰ Dasarathi, *Malabarile Mappila Lahala*, Trivandrum, 1969, pp.94-100.

¹²¹ Dhanagare, *op. cit.*

desperation. The *Mappila* peasantry of South Malabar was also helplessly left in the hands of heavy oppression by the landlords.

It was in such a tense situation that the waves of nationalism spread into Malabar and it changed the situation in to more enthusiastic and energetic. Organized political activity motivated by nationalist sentiments started in Malabar only in the second half of the second decade of 20th century.¹²² However, the development of a kind of national consciousness can be traced to the decades of 19th century itself, especially through the writings of many people in vernacular languages¹²³. Even though, there was the Congress organization in Malabar since 1903, it could not establish its deep roots in Malabar till 1916. It was with the formation of Malabar District Congress Committee at Calicut that the Congress got an organized form¹²⁴. Later the tenancy organizations were also established and it got more popularity than Congress, because at that time the Congress was an organisation of elitist middle class. Hindus and the poor tenants had no role in it. It was in the later days, especially after the introduction of Khilafat and Non Co-operation Movement that the Congress and its nationalist activities reached into the hands of poor as well as wealthy people of Malabar. This tenancy, Khilafat and Non Co-operation Movement soon succeeded in

¹²² M. Gnanadharan, *Rebellion, op. cit.*, p.48.

¹²³ For example O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, Calicut, 1965(Reprint).

¹²⁴ Perunna K.N. Nair, *Keralatiele Congress Prasthanam*, Cochin, 1985, p.20.

drawing the *Mappila* peasantry into the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist struggle.¹²⁵ In the words of Gail Minault, "in Malabar District, as with the Kisan Movements in U.P, political activity during the Non Co-operation Movement was combined with the local demands for tenancy reform".¹²⁶

Before the starting of Khilafat and Non Co-operation Movement the Tenancy Movements were started in Malabar. From the very early period itself, the *Mappila* and *kanam* (mostly Nairs belonging to middle class) tenants tried to find out a solution for tenancy problem. It was stated that in 1909, the Hidayathul Muslimin Sabha at Manjeri, submitted a memorial before the Governor, related to the difficulties of *Mappila* tenants and appealed for a solution to their sufferings.¹²⁷ But it became fruitless. From 1915 onwards, these tenants started organizing Tenancy agitations, but it was confined only to the *kanakkadians* and *verumpattakkudians*, and the poor tenants had no role in it.

Till 1916, no attempt had been made to launch an organized revolt, and in 1916, the Malabar Tenancy Association was formed. Very soon it could establish its branches in various parts of the District.¹²⁸ In the early periods, it could not get the support of Congress due to the elitist majority in the Congress. The tenancy

¹²⁵ K.N. Panikkar, *Against*, *op. cit.*, p.116.

¹²⁶ Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement-Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, Delhi, 1950, p.145.

¹²⁷ A copy of the memorial is available in Hidayath-ul-Muslimin Sabha library, Manjeri. Information given by Muhammad Poozhikath, Malappuram.

¹²⁸ Its leaders were M. Krishnan Nair, K.P. Raman Menon, G.Sukumaran Nair, and M.M. Kunhrama Menon. For details see A.K. Poduval, *op. cit.*, pp.16-17.

question came up for discussion in the First District Conference of Congress held at Palghat on 4th and 5th March 1916. The leaders of Malabar Tenancy Association tried to pass a resolution in the conference, but due to the oppression of the *jenmies*, the resolution had to be withdrawn.¹²⁹ The *Mappila* participation was very less in this conference and the participants were confined to a few merchants, businessmen and former civil servants. From Valluvanad Taluk, only one *Mappila* attended the conference and there were no *Mappila* delegates from Kurumbranad, Wynad and Ernad Taluks.¹³⁰ Due to this, the *jenmies* got prominence in the conference and they could check the passing of the resolution.

Similar annual conferences were held in Malabar from 1917 to 1919, and the tenancy question was a point of debate also, but it failed to draw attention to the basic agrarian problems of Malabar or bring *Mappila* masses closer to the national movement.¹³¹ Thus power politics, between 1885 and 1920, alienated *Mappila* peasants, particularly in South Malabar. Meanwhile at the national level, the pathetic conditions of *Mappila* peasants, got attention. Even Gandhiji questioned the attitude of Hindu landlords and officials towards the *Mappila* peasants.¹³² Even then the authorities were not ready to open their eyes towards these poor sections of the society.

¹²⁹ Madhavan Nair, *Kalapam*, *op.cit.*, p.87.

¹³⁰ Dhanagare, *op. cit.*, p.76.

¹³¹ P.K.K.Menon, *History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1972, pp.73-76.

¹³² M.P.S. Menon, *M.P. Narayana Menon- A forgotten pioneer*, Calicut, 1998, p 15.

Eventhough the first Tenancy Association was formed in 1916, they did not launch any organized agitations until 1919. In the 1920 Manjeri Conference, a resolution was presented demanding Tenancy Reforms. K.P. Raman Menon presented this resolution in the conference. Inspite of all protests of the *jenmies* the resolution was passed. Following this, many Tenancy Committees (*Kudian Samghams*) were organized in Malabar.¹³³ Later this Tenancy Association had its branches all over Ernad, Valluvanad, and Ponnani and in other major Taluks. The anti-landlord and anti-British character of the movement attracted *Mappila* peasantry in the tenancy agitation. Due to the influence of its leaders like M.P. Narayana Menon and Kattilasserri Muhammad Mussaliar the movement achieved immense popularity. The *Mappila* tenants in these areas themselves took initiative to organize and to resist against the oppression of the landlords.¹³⁴

The local *Mappilas* were more enthusiastic in forming such associations. It was with the initiative of these local *Mappilas* that the Zamorins Estate Kudiyan Nivarana Sangham (Union for Readdress of Grievances of Tenants of Zamorins Estate) was formed at Kottakkal. Its main aim was to resist the oppression of the *jenmies*.¹³⁵ But in many places, the tenants used these Union for unlawful agitations without the recognition of Tenancy Associations. Madhavan Nair had written about the difficulties suffered by the innocent *jenmies* at the hands of some

¹³³ Madhavan Nair, *Kalapam*, *op. cit.*, p.82.

¹³⁴ K.N. Panikkar, *Against*, *op.cit.*, p.121.

¹³⁵ Madhavan Nair, *Kalapam*, *op. cit.*, p.

tenants at Kodur and Kuruva. These *jennies* were even unable to meet their daily needs.¹³⁶ Eventhough, such rare instances were there in the midst of their functioning, the Tenancy Association had played a major role in organising both *Mappilas* and Hindu tenants under one banner and thereby confining a collective action among them. In these Tenancy Associations, major participation was confined to the *Mappila* peasants. Regarding the role of *Mappilas* in the movement E.M.S Namboodiripad commented that: "with all his traditional illiteracy, backwardness and priestriddenness, the *Mappila* peasant is much more a class conscious peasant than a community conscious *Moplah*".¹³⁷ The Tenancy Movement, thus, got much popularity among the common people mainly due to the influence and work of its leaders. It has been stated that along with Kattilasserri Muhammad Mussaliyar, M.P. Narayana Menon traveled in almost all villages in Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks and organized *Kudiyan Sanghams* and set up meetings and associations.¹³⁸ These meetings and discussions helped to arouse nationalist feelings among the illiterate and poverty stricken *Mappila* peasants and they decided to join under one banner. As a result of all these organisations and efforts of their leaders, in 1920, a District-wide Tenant Association was formed known as Malabar Kudian Sangham. It was in such a

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.85-86.

¹³⁷ E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *Selected Writings*, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p.

¹³⁸ M.P.S.Menon, *op. cit.*, p.25

situation prevailing in Malabar that the Khilafat and NCM made their entry into Kerala and it could introduce deep roots in to the soil.

The *Mappilas* of Malabar entered into the political scene only after the introduction of Khilafat movement, which was started by the eminent Muslim leaders as a reaction against the ill-treatment meted out towards the Sultan of Turkey by the British Government. The British Government dishonoured the commitment which they had given to the Muslims of India that in the event of an allied victory, Turkey would not be dismembered. But contrary to this agreement, after the war, they prepared a plan for dividing the Turkish Empire.¹³⁹ The Khilafat Movement was started by the Indian Muslims, as a reaction towards this treachery of the British. Muslim leaders like Muhammad Iqbal, Abul Kalam Azad and Moulana Muhammed Ali sought to develop Indian Muslims sympathy towards Pan-Islamic ideas in general and Ottoman Sultan and the Khilafat in particular.¹⁴⁰ As a result of this, the Muslims of India showed their full support to the Khilafat. 17th October 1919 was observed as Khilafat Day by Muslims throughout India.

Mahatma Gandhi was more sympathetic towards the Muslims. Meanwhile the Congress decided to start Non Co-operation Movement as a reaction to the

¹³⁹ O.P. Ralhan, *Indian National Movement-Panjab Martyrs of Freedom*, Vol.2, Delhi, 1994, p.173.

¹⁴⁰ P. Hardey, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p.117, cited in M. Gangadharan, *Rebellion*, op. cit., p.69.

Jalian Wala Bagh incident and against the passing of the Montague Chelmsford reforms. The first Khilafat Conference conducted at Delhi in November 1919 was followed in February 1920 by the organisation of the Central Khilafat Committee at Bombay, which prompted a day of fasting by all Indian Muslims on 19th March, 1920.¹⁴¹ This conference was conducted under the chairmanship of Mahatma Gandhi. It was in this conference that Mahatma Gandhi, for the first time, declared Non co-operation with the government. Mahatma Gandhi and leaders of Indian Muslims decided to launch the Khilafat and NCM from a common platform. As Gandhiji and Ali brothers proclaimed a Hindu Muslim entente, the two communities began working together as never before or since¹⁴².

The *Mappilas* of Malabar also didn't keep away from this general wave of Muslim concern for the fate of Turkey. The conditions of Malabar at that time were very favourable to keep Muslims under the banner of an anti-imperialist struggle. The conditions in Malabar had deteriorated after 1st World War in several respects. Poverty became rampant. The conditions were now aggravated by the significant increase in population and by the fact that many soldiers had returned from the war and remained jobless¹⁴³. The prices of all essential commodities to the people of interior Malabar increased and the poor people were unable to purchase these commodities. This created disillusion and

¹⁴¹ Roland. E. Miller, *op. cit.*, p.130.

¹⁴² Unity in the real sense not unity between Hindus and Muslims, but between Congress and Khilafat.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.126.

dissatisfaction among the commoners.¹⁴⁴ When the prices of all necessary items such as rice increased in double, the eyes of poor section who were not in a position to purchase it, turned into the "*pathayams*" (store places) of the *jenmies* and this created all the troubles¹⁴⁵. A contemporary observer mentions that a "food riot" that occurred in Malabar during the first stage of the Rebellion and in the earlier months of the Rebellion, the rebels requested for sacks of grains from those who possessed it.¹⁴⁶ It has been reported that in this stage they demanded only food grains and not threatened to take away the life of prominent wealthy Hindus.¹⁴⁷ In this stage the messages of Khilafat and Non Co-operation Movement reached Malabar and the movements received widespread support from the *Mappilas* of Malabar. Such economic troubles and difficulties dragged the poor *Mappilas* into the Khilafat and Non Co-operation Movement, which they believed, would end the feudal hierarchy that existed in society. *The Cochin Argus*, a newspaper published from Cochin wrote about the sympathy shown by the *Mappilas* in a number of places in Malabar.¹⁴⁸ The District Magistrate in his report about the role of *Mappilas* in Pan-Islamic movement pointed out that the educated *Mappilas* in centers such as Malappuram, Perinthalmanna, Mannarghat

¹⁴⁴ Surendran, "Malabar lahalah- Karshaka lahalayano" in *Prabhatham* newspaper, dated 30th May 1938.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Perumpalli Manakkal Krishnan Namboodiri, aged 85, Mankada-Pallippuram, Malappuram, on 20-8-2003.

¹⁴⁸ *Cochin Argus*, dated 25th November 1911, MNNPR, TNA, cited in M. Gangadharan, *Rebellion, op. cit.*, p.71.

and Mampad were following the course of war with keen interest. The Magistrate also reported about continuous prayer for forty days conducted in Perinthalmanna mosque presumably for the success of Turkish Sultan.¹⁴⁹ This shows the keen interest shown by rural *Mappila* population of Malabar towards the movement.

The Tenancy issue also acted as a strong motivating force in the process of drawing people, especially *Mappilas* in to the Khilafat and Non Co-operation Movement. In the early days of 1921, the tenants conference had decided to begin Non Co-operation Movement against *jenmies* demanding fixity of tenure for all tenants in South Malabar.¹⁵⁰ Hearing the rumours about tenancy reforms, the landlords evicted more tenants.¹⁵¹ As the agrarian tensions increased, the Nair leaders of Tenancy Association and the Congress sought to mobilise the active support of the *Mappila* cultivators both for tenancy reforms and in the name of Khilafat.¹⁵² Due to the participation of *Mappila* tenants in the Khilafat movement, it received more enthusiasm and a rising tide of such enthusiasm was sweeping allover the country.

The Khilafat and Non Co-operation Movement could establish its deep roots in Malabar as a result of the Manjeri Conference held in April 1920. In this

¹⁴⁹ C.A.Innes to under Secretary, Government of Madras, 25th November 1912, Madras Judicial Proceedings No. 2040, dated 9th December 1912, pp.5-14, TNA, cited in *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁰ *Madras Mail*, 20th January 1921, p.6, MNNPR, TNA, Chennai.

¹⁵¹ Robert.L. Hardgrave, *op. cit*, pp.7-8.

¹⁵² *Ibid*.

conference majority of the delegates were *Mappila* peasants.¹⁵³ A resolution demanding tenancy legislation was passed in this conference inspite of the opposition by the *jenmies*. The clear stand taken by Manjeri Conference on the agrarian question paved way for taking Congress politics to the rural areas and it ensured the involvement of the *Mappila* peasants in the national agitation.¹⁵⁴ More than this, the Manjeri Conference had also passed resolutions regarding various issues, especially the Khilafat and the 1919 Constitutional Reforms, though there were oppositions against these from the part of Annie Besant and many other leaders. Besant was of the view that Congress should not launch the Non Co-operation Movement. But the demand of Mrs. Besant was rejected upholding the quest for freedom from the cruel repression of Punjab and other places and the political demand of regaining the power of Turkish Sultan. The tenancy problem also combined together in the political scene of Malabar. As the majority of the tenants in Malabar were *Mappilas*, the call of Gandhi and ShoukathAli sparked very spontaneously in Malabar.

Following the Manjeri Conference, Malabar witnessed an unprecedented progress in national awakening. Tenancy and Khilafat committees were established in every nook and corner of Malabar. A series of meetings were conducted in the common platform and the leaders of the Tenancy and Khilafat

¹⁵³ K.K.N. Kurup, *Mahathaya Mappila Parambaryam*, Calicut, 1998, p.65.

¹⁵⁴ S.M. Muhammed Koya, "Peasant masses in Malabar 1921" in E K G Nambiar(ed), *Agrarian India-Problems and Perspectives*, Association of Peasant Studies, University of Calicut, 1999, p.56.

Movements were the same.¹⁵⁵ The audience and speakers were also the same and "these two movements were inextricably merged into one", according to Bipan Chandra.¹⁵⁶ Following the visit of Mahatma Gandhi and Shoukath Ali on 18th August 1920 at Calicut to bring the messages of Khilafat and Non Co-operation Movement to the people of Malabar, Khilafat Committees were formed in various parts of Malabar. After the Nagpur Congress in December 1920, Malabar Khilafat Committees became more active. Khilafat offices were opened in various parts of Central Malabar, especially at Manjeri, Thirurangadi, Ottappalam, Ponnani and Calicut and united propaganda of the Congress and the Khilafat became very strong.¹⁵⁷ It was during this time that the National spirit rose into its practical form in Malabar. Each village became centers of Khilafat and NCM propaganda. The joint conferences of Congress, Khilafat and students at Ottappalam from 23rd to 26th April 1920 gave a new spirit to the nationalist activities.¹⁵⁸ British authorities got alarmed while witnessing the progress of the popularity of Congress-Khilafat agitators in Malabar, which was a centre of series of outbreaks in the earlier period. So they started widespread repressions. Even at the venue of Ottappalam Conference, ruthless police beating was carried out. Malappuram Kunhi Thangal, Ramunni Menon, K. Madhavan Nair and the like leaders roused the tendency of taking revenge among the crowd at Ottappalam. The advice of leaders like K.P.

¹⁵⁵ E.M.S.Namboodiripad, *Malabar Kalapam-Oru Vilayiruthal*, Trivandrum, 1997, p.7.

¹⁵⁶ Bipan Chandra *et.al.*, *India's Struggle for Independence*, Delhi, 1989, p.201.

¹⁵⁷ P.A. SaydMuhammed, *Kerala Muslim Charitram*, Trichur, 1969, p.224.

¹⁵⁸ K.K.Muhammad Abdul Kareem, *K.M. Moulavi Sahib*, Thirurangadi, 1985, p.89.

Kesava Menon, Kattilasserri Muhammed Mussaliar Sahib and so on made the situation calm. The discipline and communal harmony maintained in the Ottappalam Conference created a feeling of fear among the imperialist authorities. It is said that the authorities started preparations for a revolt in Malabar from this conference onwards.¹⁵⁹

Alarmed by the popularity of these movements, the District administrators adopted severe coercive measures like the arrests of the leaders, the prohibition of public meetings, fines on newspapers, search of Khilafat offices and arrest and harassment of volunteers. These repressive measures made the movement more popular and militant.¹⁶⁰ Moozhikunnath Brahmaddattan Namboodiripad, an innocent victim of police repression, remarked that "it was the police repression that caused the Rebellion of 1921".¹⁶¹

In the midst of all these repressions, the Khilafat Committees became more active in Malabar. Provincial Khilafat committees were formed at Kondotty, Malappuram, Tanur, Thirurangadi, Parappanangadi, Pandikkad, Aravankara and Pookkottur. Khilafat volunteer corps was formed and a particular dress code was implemented for it. They wore a Turkey hat with moon symbol, kakki shirt and

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ K N Panikkar, "Peasant Protests and Revolts in Malabar" in P.J. Cheriyan (ed.), *Perspectives in Kerala History*, Trivandram, 1999, p.420.

¹⁶¹ Moozhikkunnath Brahmaddathan Namboodiripad, *Khilafat Smaranakal*, Calicut, 1965, p.10.

pants.¹⁶² The Khilafat flag with the crescent symbol and words of virtue sprang up all over Eranad. The volunteers were given training by former *Mappila* soldiers, who had retired from service after the 1st World War.¹⁶³ Through these actions, the movement could establish deep roots among the poor *Mappila* population in Malabar.

The Rebellion had its origin with the attempt to arrest V.Muhammed, a local Khilafat worker and tenant of Nilambur Kovilakam at Pookkottur. The *Mappilas* reacted against this very severely.¹⁶⁴ But this incident was happened behind the curtain and the curtain was removed only on 20th August, 1921 with the arrest of large number of Khilafat workers. This arrest following the Thirurangadi raid "caused panic", in the words of K.P. Kesava Menon.¹⁶⁵ The news of Thirurangadi raid spread like a wildfire through out the surrounding areas and with in the next five days, it spread to the whole of Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks and it swept with a "startling spontaneity".¹⁶⁶ Very soon the Rebellion spread into the entire Malabar and it really shocked the British authorities.

¹⁶² K.K.N. Kurup, *Mappila Parambaryam*, *op. cit.*, p.71.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ M. Gangadharan, "The first Kerala State Conference", in *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 4th November 2001, p.49.

¹⁶⁵ K.P. Kesava Menon, "Crusading a Cause", in *1921 Movement: Reminiscences*, Publication Division, Govt. of India, 1971, p.189.

¹⁶⁶ Roland E. Miller, *op. cit.*, p.137.

The leadership of the Rebellion was largely drawn from the Khilafat Committee members and from the Tangal group of religious leaders. Many of its leaders had the experience of participating in earlier outbreaks. One of the most important leader, Ali Mussaliar, had earlier experience in participating some other revolts raised against the British authorities. He was a religious leader who had severe enmity towards the British authorities. He had been deported from Malabar along with his father for their active participation in the Manjeri outbreak of 1896. It was only 10 years before 1921 that he had returned to Malabar. He became the *Mudaris* of Thirurangadi Jamiyath Mosque.¹⁶⁷ He had great influence among the *Mappilas* of Malabar. It was the rumour of his arrest that provoked the *Mappilas*, which was later, turned in to the Rebellion of 1921. Like Ali Musliar, there were a large number of other leaders such as Variankunnath Kunhahammad Haji, Kattilasserri Muhammad Mussaliar and so on who also had great influence among the *Mappilas*. But in the later stages, slight deviation can be seen in the attitude of some other religious leaders. Both Tottenham¹⁶⁸ and Moozhikunnath Brahmaddattan Namboodiripad¹⁶⁹ have referred to the attitude of Kunhi Qadar, the leader of the movement at Tanur, who regarded it as "purely religious movement" and war which mixed up with all ridiculous Hindu propaganda". For them, religion was a medium, which shows ways to them in the crucial movement which separates

¹⁶⁷ K.K.Muhammed Abdul Kareem, *1921 le Khilafat lahalayum Ali Mussaliyarum*, Thirurangadi, 1968, pp.14-17.

¹⁶⁸ Tottenham, *op. cit.*, p.6.

¹⁶⁹ Moozhikkunnath Brahmaddathan Namboodiripad, *op. cit.*, p.iii.

good and bad in way of their life.¹⁷⁰ More than religious reasons, such people had intense hostility to the British, as they were responsible for losing all of their privileges, which they had enjoyed during the Mysorean rule.¹⁷¹ It was these leaders who played a major role in sowing the seeds of nationalism among the *Mappilas*. It is said that as part of the religious sermons in Muslim mosques, the leaders emphasized the religious importance of the struggle against "British giant".¹⁷² These sermons helped a lot to arouse both anti-imperialist and religious feelings among the illiterate *Mappilas* who ever considered the words of religious leaders as the final.

During the first stage the Rebellion, the hostility of the *Mappila* rebels was clearly directed against the government and the landlords. The mode of action was similar in all places. Government offices were destroyed, records were burnt, treasuries were looted, and police stations were attacked. The system of communication was completely disrupted, telegraph wires were destroyed and roads were blocked by laying cut down trees. As a result, police posts were expanded and the government offices were abandoned and the administration was completely collapsed.¹⁷³ Many Hindu landlords were attacked and their houses

¹⁷⁰ M.G.S. Narayanan, "1921-Prasnangalum Sameepanangalum" in *Wagon Tragedy Smaranika*, Calicut, 1981, pp.92-96.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² E.M.S Namboodiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1948, p.236.

¹⁷³ K N Panikkar, "Peasant Revolts" in P.J. Cheriyan (ed.), *Perspectives, op. cit.*, p.423.

were looted. Initially, the objective of the rebels was to establish a stronghold, acquire supplies of food grains, arms and ammunition and to demolish all symbols of British Raj.¹⁷⁴ By the end of August, the whole interior regions of South Malabar, with the exemption of Palghat Taluk, were under the control of the rebels and the government had to ask the army to take over the civil administration. The attempts, which were made by some liberal Congress and Khilafat leaders to pacify the rebels, were in vain.¹⁷⁵ It was stated that the Congress leaders like K.P. Kesava Menon, K. Madhavan Nair, and U. Gopala Menon were afraid to go to the interior areas and preach the message of nonviolence to the *Mappilas*.¹⁷⁶ Melmuri Abdu Haji and his followers hated Madhavan Nair and Gopala Menon and instructed not to mention their names with Shoukathali and Muhammed Ali. He often said, "Madhavan Nair and Gopala Menon should be killed first".¹⁷⁷

At the end of August, the Rebellion spread over the entire South Malabar. The angry *Mappilas* burnt Taluk courts, many public buildings and killed some government supporters.¹⁷⁸ Till 28th August, in many areas of Malappuram, the British administration was paralyzed and it ceased to exist in Tirurangadi, Manjeri and Perinthalmanna. In these areas, free rule under the rebel leaders was

¹⁷⁴ Dhanagare, *op. cit.*, p.80.

¹⁷⁵ C.F. Andrews, "The first days of Moplah rising" *Modern review*, Calcutta, Vol. XXXI, 1922, pp.469-72., cited in *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁶ M.P.S.Menon, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁷ Statement of Karatt Moideen Haji to inspector M. Narayana Menon on 8th June 1922, in Hitchcock, *Rebellion*, *op. cit.*, p.190.

¹⁷⁸ A.K. Pillai, *Congressum Keralavum*, Kottayam, 1986, p.294.

established.¹⁷⁹ Most regions of the Eranad and Valluvanad Taluks came under the control of the *Mappila* rebels. Some more zealous among them are said to have occupied seats of the judges of the local courts, assumed the title of Ali Raja in a ceremony at the Jamayat Mosque in Ponnani, the central mosque of *Mappila* religious organization.¹⁸⁰ In Eranad region 'Khilafat Rajs' were established and Kunhahammad Haji and Mammed proclaimed themselves as presidents. They recruited armies, organized police and instituted courts for trying criminals. Kunhahammed Haji proclaimed the liberation of the country from the British. A moratorium on all taxes for one year was granted. Passports were issued for those who wanted to travel outside his 'Raj'. A fee was charged for the passport which was determined by the financial ability of the applicant. The peasants were ordered to harvest the paddy crops of the landlords.¹⁸¹ Seethikoya Tangal of Kumaramputhur was said to have declared himself as the "king of Mannarghat". At the same time some other leaders like Chembrasser Tangal turned their attention towards Hindus¹⁸² and it is reported that he murdered about 38 Hindus.¹⁸³

It was in the second stage of the Rebellion that the army and police started taking over the rebel areas and sought the help of Hindus to capture rebels, and

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Robert. L. Hardgrave, *op. cit.*, p.16.

¹⁸¹ C.Gopalan Nair, *op.cit.* pp.76-80.Also see in K.N. Panikkar, "Peasant Revolts in Malabar", in A.R. Desai (ed.) *op. cit.*, p.620.

¹⁸² In an interview with Nellikuth Muhammed Mussaliar, aged 85, Nellikuth, Manjeri, on 7-10-2004, he told about these types of murdering by some leaders.

¹⁸³ Robert.L. Hardgrave, *op. cit.*

thus the Rebellion was turned in to an anti-Hindu one. In this situation the rebels committed many atrocities against the Hindus. In many areas they did not attack any Hindu brethren, but captured almost all the wealth from their houses, especially from the Namboodiri *Illams*. These activities created a panic in the minds of all Hindus, especially due to widespread rumours regarding *Mappila* attacks on Hindus. Due to fear, most of the Hindus, especially upper sections, left their native regions and sought shelter either in the nearby *kovilakams* or in the houses of relatives in nearby areas like Trichur. They came back only after six or eight or even one year after the Rebellion.¹⁸⁴ And these happenings made the Hindus believe that the fanatic activities of Muslims caused all of their sufferings. It has been reported that one section of the *Mappilas*, after capturing of their leaders by the authorities turned violent and it was these section that had committed all the atrocities against Hindus. The position of Hindus in the riot region was most embarrassing as unless they gave no information about the possible hiding places of the rebels and movements of them to the troops (who were not familiar with the topography of the land), they would be arrested or persecuted for being pro-khilafat.¹⁸⁵ If they gave such informations, the rebels would turn towards them. It has been reported that at Thuvvur, a place near Karuvarakundu in the Eastern Ernad some Hindus were massacred. The refugees

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Perumpalli Manakkal Krishnan Namboodiri, Mankada Pallippuram, aged 86, on 20-8-2003. Also see in E M S Namboodiripad, *Atmakatha*, Thiruvanthapuram, 1995, p.45.

¹⁸⁵ P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p.100.

from Thuvur reported that the rebels burned about 50 houses of Hindus and about 34 Hindus were murdered and their heads were thrown into the near by well.¹⁸⁶

Kerala Patrika reported the story of the death of one Krishnan Nair, who had rendered a lot of help to the authorities for arresting the rebels. First his skin was pecked off from the body, his legs and his two arms were completely cut off, and ultimately his neck was cut off. The other two were soon hacked to pieces.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, a rebel pierced his knife in to the abdomen of a pregnant woman and a baby of six months was snatched away from the breast of its mother and was cut into pieces by another rebel.¹⁸⁸ Such instances could be seen in Malabar, as a mark of the cruelty of these of rebels. The rebels engaged in not only murder, but in plunder also. The remnants of such atrocities can be seen in many of the old houses of Hindus even at present. But Muhammad Abdu Rahiman had denied the view that the *Mappila* attacks on Hindus were due to the help rendered by them to British military. In a letter to the Central Khilafat Committee Secretary, Bombay, Muhammed Abdurrahman wrote that: "I have got reliable information to the effect that the Muslim attacks against Hindus have been leveled not only for the reason that the Hindus helped the police for their arrest, but also that they committed rape, and looting of Muslim houses in the absence of men. Such acts happening

¹⁸⁶ *Malayala Manorama*, dated 6th October 1921, Madhavan Nair and others also reported that they saw the heads of these Hindus in the well and in it they counted heads of three *Mappilas*.

¹⁸⁷ *Kerala Patrika* dated 1st March 1922, Wednesday, cited in C.Gopalan Nair, *op.cit.*, p.63.

¹⁸⁸ C. Gopalan Nair, *Ibid*, quoting of a refugee.

more or less in every place provoked Muslims and fomented trouble".¹⁸⁹ There was a report in *Malayala Manorama* about a petition given by some *Mappila* women against some Nairs, who had raped them in the absence of men.¹⁹⁰ Though Hindus denied this allegation, it was a fact that, not only *Mappilas*, but Hindus also utilized the situation for all kinds of atrocities inflicting upon their own brethren. This helped to create a feeling of hatred and suspicion among Muslims and such incidents provoked Muslims to commit more atrocities such as the murder of Krishnan Nair. The rumors of such murders spread all over Malabar. But later it had been revealed that some of these were merely rumors. Once a report spread about the murder of a pregnant lady near Ferook by the army.¹⁹¹ What ever might be the truth, one thing was clear that both the police and the rebels inflicted unending sufferings to the poor population of Malabar.

The government of India took drastic measures to suppress the Rebellion. In the last of August itself martial law was declared in the Taluks of Ernad, Valluvanad and Ponnani¹⁹² and military Commanders were appointed to administer Martial Law. Special tribunals and summary courts with limited powers were supplemented with additional military courts having more ample powers to

¹⁸⁹ Letter from Muhammed Abdurrahman, President, Khilafat Committee, Calicut to the Secretary, Central Khilafat Committee Bombay, dated 8th October, 1921, TNA.

¹⁹⁰ *Malayala Manorama*, dated 30th November, 1922.

¹⁹¹ K.P. Kesava Menon, *Kazhinhakalam*, Calicut, 1986.p.60.

¹⁹² Telegram (extract) to the Government of India, No. 1711, dated 22nd August 1921, cited in Tottenham (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.293.

deal with resurgence on the spot.¹⁹³ To rescue and substitute the English troops, battalions of Gurkha, Garhwale (of Indian origin), and Kachin Chin and Karen troops were dispatched.¹⁹⁴ These troops were well trained in guerilla warfare. With the arrival of military, the situation of commoners as well as the rebels underwent a sea change.¹⁹⁵ Afterwards, a military reign was established there in interior Malabar. The government permitted full freedom and right to do any repression of the rebels. They really established a reign of terror in Malabar. They took fierce and cruel action against the *Mappilas* and desecrated their places of worship and humiliated their leaders. The Muslims were oppressed and insulted in every aspect.¹⁹⁶ Due to the most inhuman deeds of police and military, women and children had to suffer all sorts of plunder and looting, which the police and military treated as the most joyous entertainments.¹⁹⁷ *The Muslim* reported that: “the soldiers, for mere amusement shoot down *Mappilas*. After setting fire to the houses, the soldiers shoot down the *Mappila* inmates who were rushing out. They walked out with as much money and jewellery as they could find in the houses of *Mappilas*. Police officers appropriated huge amounts of money by

¹⁹³ Sukhbir Choudhari, *Moplah Uprising*, op. cit., p.54.

¹⁹⁴ Home (Pol) Department, Government of India, File No. 241/XVI/1922, Telegram Section, p.3, TNA.

¹⁹⁵ Sukhbir Choudhari, *Moplah Uprising*, op.cit., p.55.

¹⁹⁶ Special Branch Criminal Investigation Department, Strictly Confidential No.1400C, Extracts from a report dated 16th November 1922, Editorial of *Azad Hindu*, an Urdu daily of Madras, cited in K.N. Panikkar (ed.), “Peasant Revolts in Malabar” in A.R. Desai (ed.), op. cit., pp.363-64.

¹⁹⁷ Moidu Moulavi, *Moulaviyude Atmakatha*, Kottayam, 1985, p.33.

intimidation. Even after receiving money, they continued ill-treatment and several police personnel have become rich after the Rebellion."¹⁹⁸ *The Swarat* observes the ill treatment of the people by the military thus: "the military, with the help of police, instead of arresting the culprits, created unrest and created havoc wherever they went. They hunted out certain completely innocent *Mappilas* and blindly ill-treated them. They trumped up false charges against them and got them sentenced and imprisoned. The military set fire to numerous Mohammedan houses and carried away whatever they could get. They cruelly insulted aristocratic and respectable Mohammedan women. This created an impression in the minds of the *Mappilas* that the government has particular determination in harassing them and this impression was strengthened by rash actions of thoughtless bureaucrats, especially the police officers".¹⁹⁹ In more than 220 villages, the gruesome human hunting of police went on incessantly. Almost all sections of the people, both young and aged, became victims to the police brutality.²⁰⁰ It has been mentioned that in many villages in Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks, there were lot of *Mappila* houses without even a single male member. As the police caught everybody irrespective of their involvement in any criminal activity, a wave of insecurity was flowing in the minds of Ernad *Mappilas* which readily intensified the Rebellion than earlier.²⁰¹ The *Mappilas*, who were subjected to severe police brutalities,

¹⁹⁸ *The Muslim*, 15th December 1921, MNNPR, TNA.

¹⁹⁹ *The Swarat*, dated 13th October 1921, MNNPR, TNA.

²⁰⁰ M.Rashid, *Muhammad Abdurahiman Sahib*, Calicut, 1998, p.25.

²⁰¹ *Mathrubhumi* dated 20th March 1923, Tuesday, p.7.

gradually turned to be absolute mutineers and started guerilla warfare against the regiment as well as against those who were supporting them.²⁰² The British caught Muslims unscrupulously without any discrimination between pro-rebels or anti rebels. It has been stated that the false information given by government authorities to military regarding the life style and appearance of Malabar people were totally misleading, as they were absolutely ignorant of the life styles of Malabar. They were informed that all people having clean shaven head are Muslims²⁰³ and those men wearing ear rings are Hindus.²⁰⁴

The control of the rebels in these areas lasted till the British army arrived. The most horrible incident that took place in connection with the Rebellion was the Train Tragedy, which is popularly known as Wagon Tragedy. On 10th November 1921, about 90 prisoners were being taken from Tirur to Coimbatore in a closed wagon without any ventilation. When the wagon was opened at Podanur, only a few of them were alive. Sixty four were dead.²⁰⁵ When news of this cruel treatment faced by the prisoners appeared in the Madras papers, the military kept silence and they had no words to say anything about it. It is interesting to note that the affected people in this train tragedy include not

²⁰² M. Gangadharan, "Mahamardhanathinte Kalam" in *Wagon Tragedy Smaranikaa*, op. cit., p.49.

²⁰³ Moidu Moulavi, "Vargheeya Lahalayo?Alla Swatanthrya Samaram" in *Wagon Tragedy Smaranika*, op. cit., p.25.

²⁰⁴ Information given by relatives of Kannan Panikkar, Amarambalam, Malappuram.

²⁰⁵ The number varied according to differences of views.

only *Mappilas*, but also Hindus who were arrested and accused as supporters of the Rebellion.²⁰⁶ It was reported that Hitchcock was one of the principle person responsible for the massacre in the wagon affair.²⁰⁷ It was remarked by Mr. Venkatapalli Raju that there would certainly have been a worldwide storm of agitation, if, instead of *Mappila* prisoners, some Europeans had met with such a tragic death.²⁰⁸ The Rebellion, which was forcibly crushed by the British Government, lasted about six months. It caused uncountable casualties. Many were imprisoned which included even innocent people, many were murdered, many were deported and the rest had to bear numerous sufferings. Women and children, who were accused of providing help to their men, were imprisoned for long years.²⁰⁹ Even small boys were also imprisoned and considered by court as dangerous persons and were jailed. Such boys were sent in to Juvenile courts.²¹⁰ Many of the *Mappilas* were deported in to Andamans and their sufferings could not be expressed through words.

²⁰⁶ Moidu Moulavi, "Mappila lahala-Charitram Thiruthan Padilla" in *Mathrubhumi*, dated 13th November, 1973.

²⁰⁷ *Kerala Chandrika*, Quilon, 25th September 1922, MNNPR, TNA.

²⁰⁸ Report in *The Swarat*, Quilon, 26th September 1922, MNNPR, under caption "The Mappila Train Tragedy.

²⁰⁹ Files:1922, public, letter from Malabar District Magistrate regarding release of Kakkanadchalil Thamasikkum Aliyangal Ayisha Umma of Pandikkad Amsam, her son Ayammed Kutty aged 13 and her daughters Amina Umma aged 15 and Pathumma aged 10, RAC. .

²¹⁰ R.Dis No. 5270/23, *Mappila* Rebellion-Juvenile-Kaduvath Ummaru and P. Mammed, Ref: 5210/J/23, RAC.

The Rebellion made an everlasting impact upon the life of the people of Malabar. The news of the Rebellion induced communal tensions in North India. Through their communiqués, the British government tried their maximum to depict the Rebellion as a communal one. On 25th August 1921, *Bombay Chronicle* published a communiqué of Madras Government, which stated that: "there have been indications for sometime past that the agitations in Malabar have been working on the well known religious fanaticism of the more ignorant class of *Moplahs*."²¹¹ The communiqué then proceeded to refer "a widespread and dangerous agitation that had been created in certain parts of Malabar, evidently, according to the Government, the outcome of seditious pamphlets and seditious speeches."²¹² Again *Bombay Chronicle* published another appeal of government to the press to support the authority. It was reported that "according to latest details received from Eranad, the *Moplah* fanatics there, are alleged to be looting all Hindu houses, intimidating Hindu landlords, threatening to kill them and extorting huge sums of money."²¹³ Such news spread all over India and it led to the misunderstanding among the population outside Kerala that the mass movement had turned into a communal one in Kerala. The impact of this news spread through papers regarding religious persecutions and British communiqués lead to communal rifts in Northern India and later paved way for many communal

²¹¹ *Bombay Chronicle*, dated 25th August 1921, Tuesday, p.7.

²¹² *Ibid.*, dated 26th August 1921.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, dated 27th August 1921.

outbreaks.²¹⁴ Gandhiji also blamed the *Mappilas* and referred the Rebellion as “a malpractice of the *Moplah*”.²¹⁵ He wrote: “the incidents that took place in Malabar have disturbed the Hindu minds”.²¹⁶ He argued that “the violence of *Moplahs* were likely to alarm us, it impedes our progress”.²¹⁷ The Congress leaders also blamed the *Mappilas* for conducting such atrocities. E M S Namboodiripad commented that: “really the entry of Muslim religious leaders in the Non Co-operation Movement gave a colour of Islamic fanaticism to the secularist movement of Gandhiji.”²¹⁸ Even Madhavan Nair, who stood throughout for pacifying the rebels, wrote: “what will be there in the Rebellion is nothing other than religious madness of *Mappilas*”.²¹⁹

The 1921 Rebellion was started as a part of Khilafat and NCM. The rebels were mainly included from the category of poor *Mappila* tenants or *verumpattakkar*. They were not aware of nationalism or national movement even long years prior to the formation of national organizations like Congress. It was after the launching of Khilafat and NCM that the poor illiterate people of Malabar were aware of the movements against British imperialism. The Congress and Khilafat leaders tried best to infuse anti-British feelings among them. Even before

²¹⁴ Brahmaddattan Namboodiripad, *op. cit.*

²¹⁵ *Young India* 26.1/1922 in *Collected Works of Gandhiji*, Vol. XII, p.267.

²¹⁶ *Mathrubhumi*, 7th June 1923.

²¹⁷ *Collected Works of M.K. Gandhi*, Vol. XXL, August- December 1921.

²¹⁸ E M S Namboodiripad, *Malabarkalapam-Oru Vilayiruthal*, *op.cit*, p13.

²¹⁹ *Mathrubhumi*, dated 17th October 1924.

this, the anti-*jenmy* feelings were ardent among them which is visible in almost all the uprisings of 19th century. It followed in the early part of 20th century also. But it was the anti-British feelings induced by the nationalists along with many other factors caused for the 1921 Rebellion. Even though it was started by the poor *Mappilās*, it was not religious in the early part. But in the later stages of the Rebellion, it turned into a communal struggle. The rebels started to attack the Hindus. Rumors and stories spread regarding the cruelties committed by the rebels towards their Hindu brethren. They even engaged in compulsory conversions of Hindus into Islam. Naturally there will arise doubts in front of us why it turned into a communal? How does communalism emerge here?

A complex set of circumstances led to the turning of the Rebellion into a communal incident. The *jenmies* followed cruel repressive policies towards the poor tenants. Such cruel policies of *jenmies* led the *Mappilas* to take arms against them in the 19th century. These *jenmies* rendered full support and co-operation to the British authorities for their unpopular policies. When the Rebellion started, the Hindus *jenmies* provided full support to the British. Not only the *jenmies*, but their *kanakars* or *karaysthans*, who were mostly *Nairs* also gave help to the British authorities to capture the *Mappilas*. It was because of this that the rebels turned against such sections along with *jenmies*. This was more increased when they rejected protection to them. As their lords, it was the duty of the *jenmies* to give protection to their subjects, irrespective of religion. Here, instead of giving protection, they were considered as traitors and provided facilities to the British

authorities to attack them. This infuriated the *Mappilas* and later they considered as a religious war and attacked Hindu *jenmies*, local *Nairs* and other *karyasthans*. In the rural areas, the illiterate *Mappilas*, who had no leadership to lead them, considered this as a chance to take revenge against the local Hindus and conducted cruel atrocities towards them irrespective of any differences.

Moreover, the Khilafat background was also there which helped to foster communal feelings to the *Mappilas*. The *Mappilas* joined hands with the nationalists not because of their personal grievances but in the name of Khilafat. What was more ardent among the *Mappilas* was the ill treatment of Turkey than Hindu Muslim unity fostered by Mahatma Gandhi and Ali Brothers. The religious feeling of ill treatment of their religious leader was the main reason behind the joining of the *Mappilas* of Malabar in the Rebellion. The *Mappila* leaders who were there in the foreign countries like Ali Mussaliar returned back to Malabar and spread the stories of ill treatment of Turkish Sultan by the British. This helped for the development of the feeling of Muslim solidarity among them. This, along with the repressive activities of Hindu *jenmies* and their *karyasthans*, led to the turning of the Rebellion into a communal one.

The repressive policies of British government also helped to foster communal feelings among them. The British authorities followed a cruel repressive policy towards the rebels. They were treated very brutally the innocent non participant Mohammedans. They did not kept away *Mappila* women and

children. People, fearing of police repression, seek shelter in jungles. The military and Police Raj rendered unending traumas to them. There is clear evidence of absolute miseries in the areas during this age. They even used Hindus against *Mappilas*. In this stage, most of their prominent leaders like Ali Mussaliar were captured or murdered. There were no leaders to check further cruelties. Moreover, there was a food shortage in this period. This caused of turning of the rebels into robbery and plundering of Hindus, because most of the elitists Hindus were very rich, which later caused of turning of the Rebellion in to communal incident.